PRINCIPLES AND LAWS

OF THE

PROTESTANT CONFEDERATION,

ESTABLISHED IN

PRACTICAL COMMEMORATION

OF THE

REFORMATION FROM POPERY.

4TH OCTOBER, 1835.

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FORM OF BEQUEST TO THE SOCIETY.

I do give and bequeath to the Committee for the time being, of a certain voluntary Society, formed in Dublin in the year 1835, entitled "THE PROTESTANT CONFEDERATION," the Sum of Pounds sterling, free of legacy duty and all other expenses, to be paid within months after my decease, out of such part of my personal estate as shall consist of chattles real, upon trust, to be applied towards carrying on the purposes of said Society. And I do hereby direct and declare, that the receipt of the President, Treasurer, or Secretary of such Society, shall be sufficient discharge to my Executors for said Legacy.

PATRONS:

THE HON. RANDAL E. PLUNKETT, M. P.
THE HON. COLONEL WINGFIELD,
THE HON. COLONEL STRATFORD,
GEORGE ALEXANDER HAMILTON, Esq., M. P.
THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON MAGEE.

PRESIDENT,

THE REV. J. B. M'CREA.

SECRETARY,

W. ROBERTS, ESQ.

D. SECRETARY,

MR. GEORGE PHAYRE.

COMMITTEE:

REV. WILLIAM FREELAND, LL.D.
WILLIAM FITZGERALD, ESQ.
CHARLES BENSON, ESQ. M.D.
W. H. FLEMYNG, ESQ.
DAVID FITZGERALD, ESQ.
MARCUS COLLISSON, ESQ.
DANIEL AVEYARD, ESQ.
JAMES WILLSON, ESQ.

PROTESTANT CONFEDERATION OFFICE,
16, *D'Olier-Street, Dublin.*

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HISTORY AND PROSPECTUS.

That the cause of Protestantism in Ireland has for many years been laboring under an almost intolerable oppression, from a variety of causes, is a fact upon which there can be but one opinion among those who know the reality of our national circumstances. Numerous associations have adopted as many measures, each with a degree of success, to prevent the total annihilation of all that is dear to us as a people, which is inevitably involved in the fate of Protestantism. The principle of those associations, however, appears to have been too much restricted to political, local, or temporary objects; and in most cases they have operated, after an occasional excitement, to the enervation of the public mind. Something still is wanting,—practical, universal, permanent; a machinery that, once set in motion, will have a self-operating power, be comprehensive and simultaneous in its action, and not liable to be impeded by the ordinary casualties of change in the executive, or experiment in the legislative department of the state. Infallible authority assures us, that it is righteousness only,—that righteousness which protects the weak, relieves the poor, provides for the desolate, and vindicates the oppressed,—that can exalt or preserve a nation; and that institutions built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, of which Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner-stone, are the proper means for promoting that heaven-born principle. Experience, too, has demonstrated, that all the fastnesses of our faith and liberties are, under God, identified with such a combina-

tion of the higher and inferior orders as may call into exercise the best affections of our nature—SYMPATHY and GRATITUDE.

Bring Protestants of all classes as closely together as is convenient, and unite them by motives at once holy and politic. Let the unity of the faith—THE BIBLE—be the deep and broad foundation of confederacy. On this basis raise a superstructure, the exclusive materials of which shall be—BENEVOLENCE TOWARD ALL MEN—LOVE FOR THE BROTHERHOOD—HONOR TO THE KING—FEAR OF GOD. Convince its members of a common advantage,—show them a common duty,—and make them feel a common responsibility. The strongest moral feelings of human nature will thus be brought into action: the rich will take part with the poor, who are the body of the state; the poor will place confidence in the rich, its head; the mass will be benefitted by the counsel and communion of the few; and these again reap the benefit of that esteem which the people will feel for those who have taken the trouble to make them acquainted with their own influence, and how this influence may be directed to their own benefit. The feeling of mutual obligation and esteem, that must subsist in such an association, will contribute to the general harmony and welfare of the country, in the degree in which the society itself may be extended. Arrangements for frequent meetings of the members, whose immediate interests are the first objects of association, whilst free from the pernicious excitements of merely political confederacies, will generate kindly feelings, cultivate personal friendships, and create a veneration for those distinguished persons whose dignities are in a manner subordinated to the personal and individual welfare of their Protestant brethren.

Influenced by these considerations, a public meeting was convened by their proposer, on the day after the 4th of

October, 1835, THE TERCENTENARY OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION IN ENGLAND. After the announcement of the general design, and a recommendation to its adoption, the meeting was adjourned from time to time, until the 15th of October, when an association was formed, the fundamental rules of which were ultimately adopted on the 3d of February, 1836, as follows :—

FUNDAMENTAL LAWS.

1.—The Designation of the Society shall be the PROTESTANT CONFEDERATION.

2.—The essential principles of this Protestant Confederation are defined in the Scriptural injunction,

RESPECT ALL,
LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD,
FEAR GOD,
HONOR THE KING.

3.—The object of the Confederation shall be the maintenance and extension of Protestantism, by diffusing Protestant knowledge, relieving Protestants who are in circumstances of sickness, poverty, or orphanage ; providing employment, situations, tenants, &c. for Protestant servants and housekeepers, &c. ; and legitimately aiding in the increase of a Protestant constituency.

4.—The Confederation shall consist of all persons duly admitted, who shall pay 2s. 6d. or upwards as an entrance fee, and one penny per week, or who shall collect one pound per year towards a General Emergency Fund. A payment of five pounds at one time shall constitute a life member, and five pounds a-year a patron for the year in which such payment is made.

5.—It shall be competent for members of each section, afterwards described, to admit to itself by ballot; but in every instance the proposer and seconder of a candidate shall vouch for his religious character and professed belief in the Bible as the only Rule of Faith and morals. Every person so admitted shall be subject to the approval of the general committee, and be entitled to attend at all general meetings of the Confederation.

6.—In all cases of ballot for members, whether by the general or sectional committees, one-third of black beans shall exclude.

7.—The official departments of the Confederation shall be constituted as follows:—Patrons, President, General Treasurer, General Secretary, and Committee of Superintendence. The four first-named officers shall be members of the Committee, ex officio.

8.—The General Superintending Committee shall be chosen annually, by and out of such honorary members as pay at least one pound per year; and shall have a right to attend and vote at all meetings of the committees of sections. Three of such superintending committee, when they begin to act, to constitute a quorum.

9.—The economy of the Confederation shall be by distribution of its constituency and business as follows:—

General purposes, under the management of the Superintending Committee, at whose disposal, consistently with the principles and objects, as stated in rules 2 and 3, the General Emergency Fund shall be placed.

1.—Mutual and General Instruction in the principles of the Word of God.

2.—Relief of Sick and Indigent Protestants, Orphans, and Widows.

3.—Aid and Encouragement of Protestant Mechanics, Laborers, Domestic Servants, &c. &c.

4.—Loans to Protestant Tradesmen, Shopkeepers, Farmers, and others, in cases of embarrassment from persecution and other causes.

10.—Persons admitted in any of the above-named sections shall be entitled only to partake the benefits, or to vote in the proceedings, of such section or sections.

11.—Each section (excepting the 3rd and 4th sections, which shall be entirely under the management of the Committee of Superintendence, when they begin to act,) shall have its separate bye-laws and distinct sub-committee; the bye-laws not to contravene, in any particular, the general laws; and the sub-committee not to exceed in number the general superintending committee.

12.—The Treasurer of each section shall pay over to the General Treasurer once in every month such funds as may be in his hands, and shall obtain a receipt for the same; and no money shall be expended for any purpose by the Treasurer or other officer of any section but by vote of the members of such section, afterwards approved and fiated by the chairman of a general monthly meeting.

13.—The members of any other similar association, that shall pay at least two pounds annually to the Protestant Emergency Fund, mentioned in rule 4, shall be admis-

sible to all meetings of the Protestant Confederation, during the year for which such payment is made, but shall not vote on any question, nor speak, but by permission from the chairman on the motion of a member.

14.—Every member of this Confederation, whether honorary or benefitted, shall enter, or consent to have entered, his or her name in a common register.

15.—Every member of this Confederation shall receive a ticket, bearing the registered number of the owner, and the date of his or her admission, together with some distinctive mark of the section to which he or she belongs, as "General," or "Benefit."

16.—If any question shall arise not provided for by the General Laws, the same shall be referred to a joint meeting of the General Superintending Committee and the Committees of Sections, specially summoned by order of the President of the Confederation; or, on his refusal to direct such summonses, at the instance of any thirteen members of the Sectional Committees; and the decision of such joint meeting shall be final.

17.—None of these rules shall be altered or rescinded, nor any organic change in the constitution of the society shall take place, but at a regular annual meeting to be held on every 4th day of October, or on the 5th when that day falls on the sabbath. One month's notice of intention to propose such alteration to be given in writing to the Secretary.

18.—Open meetings of the Confederation shall be held, at the discretion of the president, at least once in three months; and an annual meeting for the statement of

accounts, &c. shall also be held, convened by public advertisement. All meetings of the Confederation shall be opened and closed with prayer.

BYE LAWS.

FIRST, OR KNOWLEDGE SECTION.

1.—This section shall embrace a Conversational or Debating Meeting,—a Circulating Library,—and a general Protestant knowledge depository.

2.—Members shall be chosen by ballot, one-third to exclude; shall pay two and sixpence at entrance, and one penny per week each; and shall have access to the Reading Room and Library.

3.—The Library shall be open to such persons, not members of the Confederation, as shall pay in advance for one year four shillings; for half a year, two shillings and sixpence; or for a qnarter of a year, one shilling and sixpence. Donations to the fund for literary purposes, of £2 at one time, or this amount in Books, shall entitle the contributor to a permanent use of the Library.

4.—The Reading Room shall be under the management of a sub-committee chosen for that purpose. All Books, Tracts, and Papers, admitted into the Library and Reading Room, shall be chosen by such committee, fiated by the president of the Confederation.

5.—Any person losing or damaging any volume borrowed from this library, shall forfeit the value of the set, or such sum as the committee shall determine.

SECOND, OR ORPHAN AND SICK RELIEF SECTION.

1.—Persons admitted members of this section shall pay the sum of two shillings and sixpence at admission, and shall continue to pay one penny per week to the fund; out of which temporary relief shall be afforded to the mem-

bers who may be sick, or whom the committee may consider stand in need of and deserving assistance.

2.—The widow and children of any deceased member shall receive the sum of one pound, or more if the funds allow, provided that the deceased has been a member previously for twelve months. This gratuity shall be paid by the sum of five shillings per week.

3.—Any sum of money granted to a member or his family shall in no case exceed five shillings per week; and no member can obtain relief by money out of the funds for six months after the date of his admission.

4.—The orphan of a deceased member, other things being equal, shall have a preference, on the election of orphans.

5.—If any member shall not send his weekly contribution for four weeks, he shall be fined two-pence; and not having paid in his arrears and fines on the sixth week, shall be excluded, and forfeit his privileges.

6.—The committee shall select persons of religious character, whose office shall be to visit the members at their dwellings.

7.—No person shall be admitted a member of this society who is not vouched for by the proposer as a person of sobriety and general good character, and then approved of by the president of the Confederation.

8.—Any member convicted of swearing, intoxication, or any other immorality, shall be fined, for the first offence, one shilling; for the second offence, two shillings; for the third similar offence he shall be expelled, and forfeit all his privileges.

THIRD, OR SERVANTS' AND WORKMEN'S SECTION.

1.—Members shall pay two and sixpence at entrance, and one penny per week, and shall be entitled when out of place to be registered in the book of candidates for situations. Persons not being members shall pay the sum of one shilling for registration.

2.—The grounds of admission to this section shall be a certificate of good character from last situation, approved

of by the committee; testimonial from a Protestant clergyman of attendance at a Protestant place of worship, also to be approved of by the committee, or satisfactory evidence that the individual has been prevented from attending public worship by uncontrolable causes.

3.—In no case shall any domestic servant be registered more than once in three months, without special indulgence by the committee; and any such individual registering four times in one year shall be deprived further benefit except by the same indulgence.

4.—Persons, not being honorary members of the Protestant Confederation, who may apply for servants or workmen, shall pay one shilling and sixpence for each distinct case.

5.—Servants and workmen suffering from the wicked operation of the exclusive dealing system, or from combination, shall, at the discretion of the committee, be entered on the registry without fee.

6.—Servants and workmen, being members, who shall continue in the same situation one full year, shall, on the recommendation of master or mistress, be entered as candidates for a premium in money, which shall be awarded and regulated on the judgment of the committee according to the general character of the candidate. Premiums in proportion to greater length of servitude, &c.

7.—In case of non-employment from sickness, members shall be entitled to relief in such proportion as the committee may appoint.

8.—In cases where special integrity as servants, or suffering for conscience' sake, is known to the committee, they shall have power to admit the persons without fee, and will be anxious to obtain for the individuals a better than ordinary situation.

9.—Should it at any time occur, that a false or exaggerated character is given of a servant, the person so violating the principles of this institution shall on no account enjoy the benefit of application to this registry, notwithstanding any other rule to the contrary; and any person detected in the production of a forged discharge or certificate will be punished according to law.

FOURTH, OR LOAN SECTION.

1.—The funds of this department shall be created by special contributions; by grants from the Protestant Emergency Fund; by loans on interest; and interest on sums lent.

2.—Each person applying for a loan shall receive a printed paper, containing a certificate as to character, which must be signed by two persons of known respectability, (subscribers being preferred,) otherwise the application will not be attended to. When properly filled up, the paper must be lodged one week before any answer can be given.

3.—The amount of Loans not to be less than ten shillings nor more than ten pounds at one time; and to be repaid by instalments of one shilling in the pound weekly.

4.—For every loan interest at the rate of five per cent. to be paid.

5.—The borrower must give his or her note, jointly with two solvent householders, (to be approved of by the Committee) for the amount of the loan. In no case will a minister of religion be accepted as security.

6.—For non-payment of instalments, a fine will be levied, of one penny in the pound for the first week, two pence for the second, and, if not paid the third week, the securities will be instantly sued, and no future loan be given.

7.—The instalments are to be paid and the general business transacted on Fridays, from 11 to 4 o'clock, and at no other time.

8.—Persons who may be disposed to pay into this fund, for saving, the sum of sixpence or upwards by the week, without requiring the assistance of the loan, will, in case of sickness, loss of employment, or other casualty, have a power of recalling the money at one week's notice, and shall have a preference for a loan by complying with the rules.

9.—Any person lending £25 or upwards to this fund, and requiring interest, will receive 4 per cent. per annum,

for the time the money is so lent. Two months' written notice to be given to the Treasurer, of the intention to recall any sum lent to the fund.

10.—Agreeable to the third clause of the Act 4 Geo. IV. 32 c. entitled "An Act for the Amendment of the Laws respecting Charitable Loan Societies in Ireland," no person being Treasurer, Director, Trustee, or Manager of such Institutions, or having any control in the management thereof, shall derive any benefit from any loan made in such institution, or directly or indirectly have any salary, allowance, profit, or benefit whatsoever therefrom; a copy of these rules being lodged with the Clerk of the Peace for the County of Dublin.

SETTLEMENT OF CONFEDERATION.

On the 3d of February, 1836, a meeting was held at Ebenezer Church, D'Olier-street,

The REV. MR. M'CREA in the Chair.

The foregoing Prospectus, General Laws and Regulations were read, and it was

Resolved unanimously,

That the detailed statements which have been now submitted to this meeting be adopted as the Principle and Constitution of the Protestant Confederation; and that the following Resolutions, passed at a former provisional meeting, be confirmed, viz.:—

That the Hon. Randal E. Plunkett, M.P. the Venerable Archdeacon Magee, Geo. Alexander Hamilton, Esq., M.P., the Hon. Colonel Wingfield, and the Hon. Colonel Stratford, be requested to fill the office of Patrons to this Institution. That the Rev. Mr. M'Crea, its Founder, be elected President and Treasurer, with a request that he will use his influence to increase the number of patrons and friends; W. Roberts, Esq., Secretary; Mr. George Phayre, Assistant Secretary; and the following Gentlemen Members of the Committee:—[See 3rd page.]

That the best thanks this Confederation can render, on behalf of the many poor Protestants who have already received benefit from its funds, be forwarded to a noble lady, whose Christian munificence enabled the Committee to commence the practical utility of their scheme immediately on its commencement; and whose exemplary humility in her pious charities, prevents a more particular testimony to her public virtue.

Signed J. B. M'CREA, Chairman.

Mr. M'Crea being requested to leave the chair, W. Fitz Gerald, Esq., was called to it; upon which it was

Resolved unanimously,

That the thanks of this meeting are due and are hereby given to the Rev. Mr. M'Crea, the originator of the Protestant Confederation; for having brought it thus far towards efficiency; for his very valuable donation of books to the Library, and his liberal pecuniary contribution; for his very able conduct in the Chair upon this occasion; and for his zealous and untiring exertions in the Protestant cause.

Signed WILLIAM FITZGERALD, *Chairman.*